

Many games can be played purposefully to promote language learning. Children enjoy playing, and what they don't know is that, through play, they can learn a lot of different language skills. Below are some tips and strategies on how you can make play purposeful for your child.

Tips to promote children's purposeful play:

- Ensure that you and your child are face to face so that you can hear and see each other's messages better.
- Observe body language, actions, gestures, and facial expressions, so that you can determine your child's interests.
- Describe events and emotions to target understanding of language.
- Introduce new words in meaningful contexts.
- Allow time for your child to start an interaction or respond to what you said.
- Listen to your child's words and sounds and look for opportunities to expand your child's language.

Create opportunities for your child to lead play:

1. **Encourage your child to make a request:** instead of rushing to give your child something you know he/she wants, create an opportunity for your child to ask for it.




- **Place a favorite object out of reach... then wait:** Place it in your child's view and then wait until he/she does something to ask for it.
- **Choose an activity that your child can't do without your help (blowing bubbles, getting a toy started) then wait:** Instead of immediately blowing bubbles, wait for your child to ask for bubbles; tightly close the lid on the bubbles jar and wait for your child to ask for help opening it; let a wind-up or musical toy play out, then wait for your child to ask for you to play it 'again!'

- Offer a choice and then wait
- **Pause a familiar activity and then wait:** pause activity from time to time and then child to ask to continue.

2. **Help your child to make requests or to comment**

- **Change a familiar activity... then wait:** Instead of pausing you can also change it or leave out a step. The surprise creates an opportunity for child to react and start an interaction by making a comment or asking a question.
- **Hide objects in surprising places, then wait:** Let your child find a surprise to create an opportunity for them to tell you about it.
- **When things go wrong... wait:** instead of fixing the problem right away, wait a few seconds to see what your child will do or say.

ACTIVITY	KEY WORDS/CONCEPTS	EXPANDING LANGUAGE
Mr. Potato Head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body parts • Colours • Accessories labels (e.g. hat, moustache, microphone) • Action words (e.g. jump, walk, spin, run, fall) • Other descriptive words-(e.g. silly, funny, zigzag) • Location words • Size • Numbers • Requesting vocabulary (e.g. more, all done) • Sequencing (e.g. first, second/then, lastly) 	<p>Talk about what Mr. Potato Head is doing. Ask open ended wh- questions to encourage your child to speak in longer sentences. Provide choices, focusing on some key words/concepts.</p> <p>Example: Child: "Nose." Parent: "Would you like the red nose or yellow nose?" Child: "Red nose." Parent: "Tell me <u>I want a red nose.</u>"</p>
Building blocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colours • Action words (e.g. push, stack, build) • Location words • Numbers • Requesting words (e.g. more, all done) • Sequencing (e.g. first, second/then, last) 	<p>Talk about what your child is making with the blocks. Ask open ended wh- questions to encourage your child to speak in longer sentences.</p> <p>Example: Child: "Blocks." Parent: "How many blocks do you want?" Child: "Two." Parent: "I want two blocks."</p>
Playdoh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colours • Shapes • Names of tools (e.g. cutter, rollers, scissors) • Action words (e.g. roll, pat, cut, flatten, push (with cookie cutters), twist, put in, take out, smash, squeeze) • Requesting words (e.g. more, all done) • Sequencing (e.g. first, second/then, lastly) 	<p>Talk about what your child is making with the Playdoh Ask open ended wh- questions to encourage your child to speak in longer sentences.</p> <p>Example: Child: "Playdoh." Parent gives a small amount of Playdoh. Parent: "Do you want more Playdoh?" Child: "More Playdoh." Parent: "More Playdoh please."</p>

Reference: Pepper, J. , Wetzman, E. & Manolson, A.H. (2004). *It takes two to talk: a practical guide for parents of children with language delays* (3rd ed.).Hanen Center.